3:Davis & Deacon E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

178 of sea lion oil and powdered cactus skeleton,
396 was launched. It was the largest craft they had ever possessed and came to be called the "battleship," for its size.

114 After having established firm friendship with the tribe in 1922, it was possible two
221 years later to carry out an extensive plan to learn the habits of the Seris by living among them, sharing their comradeship along with their privations. At this time they still had no homes that could even be called semi-permanent. Moving here and there in response to fluctuations of their precarious food supply, household things were not accumulated, and life continued to be reduced to its very simplest elements and absolute necessities. Baskets made of fiber from the torote tree, some tin cooking and water vessels (the handmade olla was seldom any longer made), some patched and filthy rags which served as blankets to the fortunate few, constituted the family possessions (Fig. 15). Starved, bony family dogs were abundant, as always, every Indian having one or two (Fig. 16). Each day they could be seen gnawing on some old fish head long since

[415]

231

[p. 264 (B)]
[Text continues on p. 265 (N)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU21 Ser NU21

342 They are mostly of ocotillo sticks and mesquite branches stood up in the sand, lashed together, and plastered with mud for protection from the wind, but not from the rain (Fig. 22). When the fishing season ends
●221 about Holy Week, they all move away to the turtle grounds on Tiburon Island, where they also hunt deer. Then in June and July they go into the desert hills to reap the harvest of cactus fruit, retiring to the lowlands thereafter to harvest the mesquite beans and to await the recurrence of the big fish. In and about Kino they are reasonably well fed and clothed, and were it not for their susceptibility to disease they would be as well-
164 off as many of the Mexicans. Influenza
161 strikes them heavily, however, and pneumonia is common, usually fatal. Their numbers dwindle and their extinction is in sight, yet for a little while these strange people will continue to tread the rocks and thorns of their desert land, a handful of Nature's primitive creatures, through whose veins flows the blood of thoroughbred American aborigines.

[p.268(C)]

5:Dawson N-5 (1940) 1944 NU31 Seri NU31

an important handicraft among these Indians. They made a shallow, coil type basket such as is characteristic of many southwestern tribes. The Seri basket, however, was remarkable for its extreme lightness in proportion to capacity, a quality due to the spongy character of the coil made of a whisp of splints of the torote. Several torotes are found in the region, the commonest species being *Jatropha cardiophylla*. Also used were the torote amarillo, *Jatropha spatulata*, torote blanco, *Bursera microphylla*, and torote prieto, *Bursera laxiflora*. The woof consisted of splints of palo blanco, *Acacia Willardiana*, or of baraprieta, *Caesalpinia gracilis*, deftly interlaced by means of a bone awl to form a smooth, practically waterproof utensil.

In pre-Columbian times the Seris commonly sought wild game, mostly deer, without the aid of weapons, using only their tremendous physical endurance against their prey, chasing the animal until it was exhausted and could be thrown to the ground. With the introduction of iron, however, the development of the bow and arrow achieved prominence, for the shaping and fastening of points had long retarded the exploitation of these implements. Few straight stemmed or straight grained plants grow in Seriland suitable for making arrow shafts, but on the flanks of the deeper gorges of Sierra Seri and Sierra Kunkaak on Tiburon Island, the Indians found one leafy shrub that filled the need, *Sapium biloculare*. The juice of this plant is also said to have been used for arrow poison. The bow was preferably of palo blanco, wrapped and strung with mesquite fiber cord.

The modern Seri tribe consists of barely more than 100 souls, with early extinction threatening from imported diseases. Their natural habits are now vastly modified and they live a comparatively sedentary life near the village of Kino, scavengering for fish heads and other refuse discarded by the fishermen, now and then fishing for themselves when in need. Every year, however, they trek off to the cactus forest for the annual feast, and in late summer many may be seen camping among the mesquite groves near the Kino well where an abundance of both mesquite beans and water makes for easy living.

In general, the Seris have a healthy appearance; the most frequent complaints are gastro-intestinal and visual defects due to avitaminosis. It is very possible that given the difficult living conditions resulting from the desert environment, a rigorous selective process among the newborn takes place so that only those who possess exceptional physical qualities survive. This explains why the majority of them retain the physical characteristics described by Hardy more than a century ago: "the Indians of Isla Tiburón are tall, healthy and well built". 164 147 142

In spite of attempts at education, the Seris do not practice the elemental rules of hygiene; their way of life, neglecting this aspect, contributes to increase the unhealthy foci which exist in the places where they have established themselves. 515 751

Dwellings.—The Seris retain many vestiges of their nomadic life, among them the hut which serves as their living quarters; many of them are simple provisional arrangements for sheltering themselves from wind and sun, and they bear no relationship to the stability and durability of our dwellings. The Seri hut was made to meet the necessities of a nomadic people who had no reason to spend much time nor work on making a dwelling which would only be used for a season (one, two or at the most three months). Nevertheless, some innovations have been introduced in the last 20 years, so that we must distinguish between two types of houses. The primitive model consists of a series of scrub pine arches interwoven with branches from the same shrub almost totally covered by foliage, tortoise shells, *zacate*, etc., with only a small hole in one of its ends as an entrance (this type of hut is the same that McGee saw in 1894 when the Seris still led a nomadic life). 342 [221] [177]

In the new model more resistent woods are used, like *sabueso*, *torote*, etc., and poles, between which is laid a layer mud. The house is rectangular, without windows; with only one entrance, but always larger than the entrance to the brush hut. Other models would have to be added to these two, due to the incorporation and utilization of tents made in the United States which some U. S. tourists or the Society of Friends have given them. The tent is used as permanent living quarters; or sometimes combined with branches to cover the primitive type huts. 342 178 [177]

Domestic Animals.—The Seris are very fond of domestic animals like the dog, cat, and finally, the chicken. For all practical purposes these animals live together with the family; they rest on the piles of rags and sand which serve the Indians as beds; lick the plates and cooking utensils; dirty the house; increase the household fauna with their fleas and other vermin thus contributing to create and unhealthy atmosphere in the home. 231 [136]

Problems of Intoxication.—Their dealings with the fish buyers, in whose stores are sold beer, mezcal and tequila, has turned them to the consumption of these drinks. The Seri drinks liquor in an uncontrolled 273 [275]

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

with this problem is the lack of legal title to the lands which the Seris own in fact but which legally belong to the nation.

Insofar as the economic problem, it is necessary to better the fishing techniques, doing away with old process of obtaining the catch through dynamite explosions. Finally, as Dr. Marroquin says, the fact should be noted that the Seris on passing from the nomadic economy to exchange economy lack the necessary knowledge to achieve success in their operations within the national and international market.

It is thus necessary to take care of these and other problems, to save this Indian group from complete extinction, succeeding on the other hand in raising their living conditions, making of them citizens capable of contributing to the progress of the State of Sonora and the Republic of Mexico as a whole.

NEW DIRECTOR OF THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS IN MEXICO

For the next two years the Director of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Mexico will be Dr. Benjamin Elson. Dr. Elson first came to Mexico in 1942 and began linguistic field work among the Sierra Popoluca Indians of the State of Veracruz. Sierra Popoluca has been the principal object of his linguistic studies since that time, and various articles have resulted from these researches. He took his degree from Cornell University with the thesis "Sierra Popoluca Morphology". He has on other occasions served as Associate Director of the Institute in Mexico.

The Associate Director will be Mr. H. J. Klassen. Mr. Klassen has done linguistic field work on Lowland Mixteco in the State of Oaxaca. He has served as Interim Director of the Institute on previous occasions.

VII ROUND TABLE OF ANTHROPOLOGY HELD IN THE CITY OF OAXACA FROM SEPTEMBER 1ST. TO 7TH.

During the month of September, the VII Round Table of Anthropology, dedicated to the study of the Indian cultures of Oaxaca, was held in the city of Oaxaca, capital of the state of the same name. Since at the present time there exists in this state a large proportion of Indians, and since during its pre-Hispanic past such important cultures as the Zapotec and Mixtec flourished there, the interest of this Round Table is evident.

Lack of space makes it impossible to present here a complete report of this anthropological meeting; therefore, we will limit our coverage to a summary of the most important points, taken from the Report of the recording secretary, Prof. Wigberto Jiménez Moreno. This report was made available to us through the kindness of Mrs. Carmen Cook de Leonard, Vice-President of the Center of Anthropological Investigations of Mexico. The complete version in English may be seen in the *Boletin* of the Center of Anthropological Investigations (N° 4, Oct., 1957, pp. 43-49).

McGee (1898:214)

estimated that maritime resources provided two-thirds of the Seri diet. Kroeber (1931: 20), approximately 30 years later, estimated the proportion at about three-fifths. In the winter of 1960, 30 years after Kroeber's visit, the Seri were obtaining at least three-fifths of their food from the sea.

In pursuit of their main source of subsistence, the Seri travel up and down the narrow coastal band. In the winter of 1960 they were occupying one temporary camp toward the southern end of the band and a permanent camp at the northern extreme. Seri women and children gather mollusks; fishing is a male occupation. In addition to gathering and fishing for their own needs, the Seri dispose of a portion of their catch on the commercial market. This enterprise began about 1930, and was encouraged by the establishment, in 1958, of the Sociedad Cooperative de Produccion Pesquera Seri with the cooperation of the Mexican government.

The Pacific green turtle constitutes the largest single item in the Seri diet for at least six months of the year—from January to June—and it is also caught occasionally at other seasons. In 1896 McGee estimated that it provided 25 per cent of the total food supply. Emphasizing the intimate ecological relationship between the Seri and the turtle, McGee (1898: 186-187) wrote:

> ... perhaps half of the aggregate life of the tribe is spent within easy reach of its [the turtle's] feeding and breeding grounds, and tribesman and turtle have entered into an inimical communality something like that of the Siouan Indian and buffalo in olden time. ...

Kroeber (1931: 20) believed that McGee stressed the Seri-turtle relationship too strongly and overestimated its contribution to the diet. McGee (1898: 187), in support of the importance of the turtle to the Seri, points to the fact that the turtle carapace is used for, among other things, a house covering and buckler, a cradle, a coffin, and footgear. The carapace is currently used for supporting and roofing houses and as a starvation food. The contribution of the turtle to the diet varies from year to year, but observations made in 1960 suggest a range of from 15 to 20 per cent as a reasonable estimate.

Seri men fish for turtle from boats, which are manned by two or three men and are propelled by oars, sails, outboard engines, or any combination of the three. The boats operate either individually or in groups. The men fish by night or day, depending on the weather and sea conditions. When they fish at night, they use a kerosene lamp to attract turtles to the surface. The principal implement is the harpoon.

The harpoon tackle of the Seri is illustrated in Figure 1. It consists of a foreshaft (c-h), a mainshaft (j-k), and an extension cord (i). The component parts of the foreshaft are a projectile point (c), a gasket (d), a wrapping cord (f), a hafting base (g), and a lead cord (e and h). In preparation for turtle fishing, the hafting base (g) is plugged into the socket (j) on the main shaft (k), and the extension cord (i) is looped through the lead cord (h).

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

1

INTRODUCTION

[13] [12] [36] [22] [46] The territory discussed in this paper is somewhat larger than the historical area occupied by the Seris. While Seri settlements are limited today to a quite narrow range, the Tiburon Island and the coast of Sonora immediately adjacent to it, they are familiar with a far larger region, owing to their periodic trips, either on their own after fish, turtle and game or, occasionally, in the temporary employ of the Mexican fish-traders and even farmers. The further away from Tiburon perimeter, the lesser their familiarity with a locality.

The area is limited by Hermosillo in the east, Punta Penasco and Porto Libertad in the north, and Nogales in the south, and finally it includes also the coast of Baja California which the Seris sometimes visit. It also includes all of the islands within that area, Tiburon, Patos, Rasa, Angel de la Guarda, San Lorenzo and San Esteban.

137 With very minor variations this entire region belongs properly to the Sonoran desert. *Palo Verde, Palo Fierro, Pithaya, Mesquite, Cholla, Sahuaro,* prickly pear, elephant tree and creosote bush are the basic plants. Among the vertebrates, 136 such forms as the Sonoran bighorn, deer, cougar, jumping rat, badger, coyote, skunk, rattlesnake, sidewinder and Gila Monster are most conspicuous and diagnostic. Among the birds are the roadrunner, the raven, as well as many pelagic or littoral birds, the pelican and cormorant among them.

132 The region is one of very low rainfall, limited to the hot summer months, in some places occuring only a few times in a year. Winters are chilly and dry with persistent winds and dust, with the temperature falling down, on rare occasion, to just above the freezing point. Summers are intensely hot, with daily temperatures usually over 100 and the water temperature of the sea along the shore not infrequently as much as 85 degrees. There are great differences between diurnal and nocturnal temperatures, very much influencing the desert life.

134 Within this region there are several different ecological zones or perhaps sub-zones, varying from the alkaline flats like Playa Noriega, and the alkali-and salt-permeated soils of Desemboque to the more bountiful slopes of the mountains and the irrigated mud-flats around Hermosillo.

121 For the sake of distinction, I have selected several of the typical localities or zones as a point of reference either because of their ecological distinctions or because of their signficance as a landmark, readily delineating a peculiar habitat. Personally I am familiar only with some of the

[P. 1A]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

361 capital by paved road. Formerly, in the twenties and early thirties, Seris' chief mainland settlement: Now with the influx of the Mexicans, the [491] Seris deserted the place completely as a camp site, [166] although they still visit it occasionally. Distinct in the extensive sand beaches and sand marine flats which harbor peculiar bird, fish and insect fauna.

7. **Guaymas**—southernmost point considered here and probably also of the Seris' historical extension. Nowadays very rarely visited by them and probably only while cruising with the Mexicans. Large settlement, many tourists. Backlands; rocky desert.

8. **Tepopa** —spectacular rocky head just south of Desemboque, opposite to Tiburon. Caves, usual mountainous vegetation, *Sahuaro*. Many Seri hunting encampments and one of the places where the Sonoran bighorn is still hunted.

9. **Coast of Baja California** — very rocky area across the bay—almost never visited by the Indians.

13 10. **Tiburon** —island in the Gulf of California separated from the mainland by a narrow channel called "Infernillo," only a mile wide. Rugged, mountainous. By **Tiburon** is meant an overall island area in distinction from **Tecomate** or the mountains.

[361] 11. **Tecomate** — a water-hole and Seri campsite on the northern shore of Tiburon. Today this is ● [221] the only permanent site on the island where these Indians, actually only a few families among them, still go to live for part of the year.

12. **Mountains of Tiburon** — rugged interior of the island, reaching up to almost 4000 feet. Usual vegetation cover with *Sahuaro* and other typically Sonoran floral components, fauna much as on the mainland except lacking cougar, bighorn and some other larger forms. The interior does have some "tenajas," that is water-holes and there is said to be a rivulet up in the mountains.

13. **Infernillo**—narrow channel between Tiburon and the mainland, often called locally "canal." For the terrestrial fauna and for birds reference is made to the mainland shores of Infernillo. For the marine fauna is meant either the open water in this channel or to the littoral off the mainland. The opposite shores and littorals are covered as "Tiburon." Maximum depth is said to be up to 25 fathoms.

14. **Isla Patos** — small island north of Tiburon and directly due west of Estero Sargente and halfway between Tiburon and Punto Tepopa. Visited [223] by the Indians only occasionally, mostly in connection with the duck hunt.

15. **Isla Raza** — a small island between Angel de la Guarda and San Lorenzo.

16. **San Esteban Island**—a round island between Tiburon and San Lorenzo, up to 1700 feet elevation. Visited occasionally during fishing or turtle [221] hunt trips or in search of a chuckawalla.

[P. 2A]

Coyote figures out probably

as an important and perhaps disreputable figure in the mythology although nothing but scraps and bits of information suggest this. It is possible that there is actually a taboo on eating this animal or perhaps it is so disreputable that eating its flesh would put a gourmant in an inferior position.

How important is the Seri mammalian diet is hard to tell. It certainly looms more heavily during the winter, because in the cool season hunting is easier than during the heat of the summer and in fact this is when most of it is done by the ardent hunters. Too, winter subjects the Seris to greater hazards and is apt to increase their dependence on the desert resources over that during the summer, even if these resources are scantier at that time.

To all of these animals one should add the semi-wild burros running about the extensive Mexican rancherias. The Indians poach on them frequently using their fire arms, usually the .22 caliber rifles. In any case, it appears that during the summer when the field work was carried out, the mammalian diet figures quite lightly on the Seri table.

Food preparation: Very little is done in the preparation of the mammalian meat. All that I could observe was the boiling of it in hot water spiced with salt. The Indians were saying that in order to have the meat of a peccary, deer or bighorn ready to eat one must boil it 2-3 hours. The same procedure is followed with the meat of the burros. In contrast to this, as shall be seen later, fish are boiled as well as roasted while the turtles are also dried and salted. Preparation of meat is done by women, certainly at least in the encampments when they are present.

Food preferences: Some of the Seri food preferences have already been mentioned. At the top of the list as the desirables are the peccary, the deer, the bighorn and the blacktail jackrabbit; at the bottom is the badger, whose meat "is not much good." There is also preference by sex. Females of both the bighorn and peccary are preferred over the males "because they do not have the bad odor like the males." This sort of favoritism also occurs among the Mexicans. However, the Indians did not elaborate beyond this point.

Other economic uses: Apart from meat, hides are also used. The hides of the deer, bighorn and peccary had been used for sleeping mats although this matter has been expressed in the past tense. Miguel Barnett also suggested that the bighorn hides had been used for clothing by the Indians in the past—but he neglected to say how long ago. During Kroeber's stays, no Seris went about in the animal or bird (pelican) skins but earlier when McGee visited them they went about in these simple garments. Judging then by Miguel's memory, the use of the bighorn hide for clothing must be pushed back to the period of World War I or even earlier.[1]

[1] Miguel Barnett indicated that the "fur" of the bighorn had once been worn for the cold season "but not now."

[P 10 A]